

## Johnson seeks IG probe of wiped Mueller team phones

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“These reports are troubling and raise concerns about record retention and transparency,” Sen. Ron Johnson wrote in a letter to DOJ inspector general Michael Horowitz. | Samuel Corum/Getty Images

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09/11/2020 07:27 PM EDT



Senate Homeland Security Chair Ron Johnson is asking a Justice Department watchdog to probe recently revealed documents that suggest members of special counsel Robert Mueller's team wiped records from their official phones.

Records [released by the Justice Department](#) this week in response to a Freedom of Information Act request suggest top Mueller aides erased the information from at least

15 phones, citing forgotten passwords, physical damage and missing hardware.

"These reports are troubling and raise concerns about record retention and transparency," Johnson wrote in [a letter](#) to DOJ inspector general Michael Horowitz. "Therefore, I respectfully request that your office open an investigation into this matter to determine what, why, and how information was wiped, whether any wrongdoing occurred, and who these devices belonged to."

Johnson is asking Horowitz to send answers by Sept. 18, as the senator winds down a related investigation of the FBI's Crossfire Hurricane investigation — the probe of the 2016 Trump campaign's contacts with Russians, which morphed into Mueller's probe in mid-2017. He's also asking whether Horowitz may be able to retrieve messages from the phones.

Johnson's request followed a letter from Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) to the FBI and Justice Department [inquiring](#) about the wiped phones and demanding that they produce all records Mueller's team did turn over, as well as unredacted copies of the FOIA documents.

Horowitz has mounted similar probes into the handling of internal messages by FBI agents involved in the Russia probe and mounted a major effort to retrieve messages deleted from some FBI phones. Horowitz [detailed his findings and retrieval methods](#) in a 2018 report.